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ABSTRACT

A film presented as factual may permit critical responses that question its purported factual objectivity and political neutrality. In class, Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of effective-historical consciousness can be used to evaluate the allegedly propagandistic messages in Leni Riefenstahl's "Triumph of the Will." Analysis of this 1934 film reveals how it reinforced racial doctrines propagated by the Nazis and by scientists who sympathized with these racial views. Somewhat paradoxically, Riefenstahl's film may be considered a harbinger of two genres in film whose essences seem contradictory: documentary and propaganda. "Triumph of the Will" contains no narration whatsoever after brief introductory remarks. Not verbalized, these remarks are printed on successive screens in short phrases. This lack of narration reduces the critical distance between viewer and event. The opening scene features Adolf Hitler emerging from a plane to grace Nuremberg with his presence, and to rescue and transform Germany. Much of the film's power lies in its consistently positive approach to racial models: the Nordic ideal is instantiated throughout the film with lavish close-ups of handsome blond types. Gadamer argued that all interpretation takes place within the context of the interpreter's prejudice, but that awareness of prejudices does not imply subjection to them. As exercises in class, ask students to pick a specific scene and interpret it through the eyes of a propagandist for the opposing side; or, to undermine the principal theme of preceding scenes, screen part of the film, then ask students to construct the next scene that would proceed logically from the one they just saw. (Forty notes are included.) (NKA)

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Triumph of the Will: A Limit Case for Effective-Historical Consciousness?

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Triumph of the Will:

A Limit Case for Effective-Historical Consciousness?

Abstract: Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will serves as a case study for showing how film could be employed as a propaganda device to substantiate Nazi racial theories. This essay applies Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of effective-historical consciousness to Triumph of the Will to demonstrate the limited ability of hermeneutics to respond critically to documentary film. The remedy for this shortcoming lies in applying rhetorical theories of invention to provide a space for resisting and responding to propaganda.

Imagine this scene. You, an enthusiastic college professor, want to introduce your students to the genre of propaganda film. Or maybe unveil the wonders of German cinematic techniques. Or perhaps reveal the nature of documentary. No matter. Whichever of these purposes fits your agenda, the choice is the same. You decide to show Triumph of the Will. You can barely contain your excitement as you announce in a trembling voice, "We are about to see a slice of film history. Take heed."

Much to your dismay, your bleary-eyed students can barely sit through the film. Afterwards, they complain that it was monotonous, "bo-ring" with the descriptive prolongation of the long "o" sound. Why should such a film earn the universal but grudging praise from film historians that it was a cinematic

landmark despite its promotional use by the Nazis? In short, why all the fuss about a film many if not most of our students cannot endure without regular jolts of caffeine?

Little research has been devoted to examining how a film presented as factual may permit critical responses that question its purported factual objectivity and political neutrality. This paper seeks to concretize Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of effective-historical consciousness by using it to evaluate the allegedly propagandistic messages in Triumph of the Will. This application reveals that effective-historical consciousness falls prey to what Jürgen Habermas identified as the Achilles heel of hermeneutics: insufficient resources to respond to ideologically tinged communication. The reason for this failure, however, is not--as Habermas would contend--the lack of regulative ideals for communicative activity. Rather, the resources to respond to propaganda lie in emphasizing the classical rhetorical canon of inventio as a complement to Gadamer's concentration on the hermeneutical equivalent of memoria.

The focus of my investigation is to reveal how Triumph of the Will reinforced racial doctrines propagated by the Nazis and by scientists who sympathized with these racial views. This objective requires responses to two lines of inquiry: (1) What made Triumph of the Will's brand of propaganda so difficult to resist? (2) How might a framework be designed for responding to films such as Triumph of the Will that present themselves as factual accounts of historical events?

Roadblocks to Resisting Triumph of the Will as Propaganda

Somewhat paradoxically, Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will may be considered a harbinger of two genres in film whose essences seem contradictory: documentary and propaganda. As a persuasive artifact, it is still hailed as "the most powerful propaganda film ever made."[1] The suasory force of this film marked it as a dangerous weapon. Triumph of the Will was banned in England, Canada, and the United States due to concern that its glorification of the Nazis might spark a resurgence of National Socialism.[2] The reaction to this admittedly persuasive film has been more suppression than response. Granted, the United States responded in kind with Frank Capra's Why We Fight series.

> But the ideological artillery of America has yet to demonstrate that it can destroy, by matching, the psychic world which she [Leni Riefenstahl] created out of nothing with camera and shears. Nazi Germany is no more, but the challenge stands. It has not been met.[3]

How might audiences resist and respond critically to films that present themselves as factual accounts?

Triumph of the Will contained no narration whatsoever after brief introductory remarks. These introductory remarks were not verbalized, but were printed on successive screens in short phrases. The phrases positioned the 1934 Reichsparteitag historically as a rebirth from spiritual decay: "Twenty years after the outbreak of World War I . . . Sixteen years after the onset of German misfortune . . . nineteen months after the beginning of the German rebirth [Wiedergeburt]." The time frame

set the stage for the opening scene: Hitler's descent from the clouds to grace Nuremberg with his presence. He emerged from the plane's belly as ready to assume command as Athena who sprang full-grown and armor-clad from Zeus's head. Like a heavenly savior, Hitler arrived to rescue Germany and transform it into an eternal empire, a thousand-year Reich.

The plea to awaken, to return to life after a period of sleep or dormancy, became a leitmotif in Nazi discourse. The regional party banners paraded during the rallies bore the slogan "Germany awaken" [Deutschland erwache], an imperative calling the nation to arise as a world power after its descent into economic and social chaos during the Weimar Republic. In a similar vein, the 1934 collection of short quotes from Hitler, titled Hitler-Worte, was volume four in the series "Germany's Awakening" [Deutschlands Erwachen], consisting of abridged works by Nazi leaders.[4]

The rebirth theme reappeared at the conclusion of Hitler's review of the young Labor Front workers in the film. After the memorable scene when the youths performed military drills with their shovels, they recited (thereby re-siting) the sites of bloody World War I battles. The flag-bearers slowly lowered the Nazi flags often dubbed "blood banners" [Blutfahne][5] as the litany of battlegrounds proceeded: " . . . in Flanders, in Verdun." The flags then sprang to the air in unison, since the dead would enjoy eternal life: "You live--in Germany!" The observer of the Reichsparteitag ceremonies could share the moment with other observers and with the participants. But the viewer

and participant also were contemporaneous with the martyrs of the past. Since the rebirth of the nation and the rebirth of the martyrs of World War I were called forth in the film itself instead of talked about from the distance of a dispassionate narrator, the viewer became an observer-participant rather than a spectator who experienced the ceremonies through narrative intermediaries.

The lack of narration 'eliminates the middleman' [sic] so to speak, reducing critical distance between viewer and event. The entire script of the movie supposedly occupied only 27 pages, compared to approximately 400 pages for a standard feature film of the time.[6] Thus the largest circulation daily newspaper in Nazi Germany marveled at "the smallest script for the greatest film."[7] The events of the 1934 Reichsparteitag were not explained for observer-participants. Instead they were swept along with Hitler's motorcade, awed by the spectacles of militaristic precision in the parades by day and the torchlight processions by night. The audience was not configured as onlookers who should be lectured about Nazism. The camera silently follows Hitler in his motorcade after his descent from the clouds. The audience literally follows his lead, seeing the crowds over his right shoulder as he cocked his arm to acknowledge their cheers. All views of Hitler speaking were shot from camera angles below him. Hitler had descended from clouds to dais, but he was still elevated visually.

Film as "Scientific Proof" of Racial Doctrine [Rassenlehre]

Film per se did not serve as a mainstay of Nazi propaganda. Goebbels as propaganda minister recognized that some means of entertainment needed to be left open to satisfy desires for escapism. Film as a whole was not transformed into a propaganda tool.[8] Instead, radio was used as the primary non-print medium for disseminating messages concerning governmental policies and ideals. The national daily newspaper of the Nazis issued the combination command and desire that "every German must become a radio listener."[9] By 1935, propaganda minister Goebbels estimated that the German radio audience numbered about seven million.[10]

Film, more so than radio, could bring to life fantasies that released viewers from the drudgery of everyday life. Editor of Völkischer Beobachter and official party ideologist Alfred Rosenberg understood the need to keep open an outlet for fantasies that could not be satisfied by other symbolic means:

> [F]ilm also has reopened, for millions of people, that source of phantasy which has been stopped up by the dirt of the great cities. Let us simply consider the present-day city minus the film: gigantic stone wastelands, dirty courtyards, grey walls, glittering lights and human restlessness.[11]

If film provided a way to distract viewers from the problems at hand, then dissatisfaction with Nazi rule would fade as audiences entered the reality on the screen. Rosenberg, like Tipper Gore, recognized that performance could glorify undesirable behaviors

"through lascivious images" and "the glorification of crime." Using biological metaphors that typified Nazi discourse concerning Jews, Rosenberg saw the potential for film to "become a means of infecting the Volk."[12]

Film, however, offered an opportunity for direct indoctrination as well as for escapism. Speaking in terms of a divine mission, a style duplicated in Triumph of the Will's visual imagery of Hitler's plane descending from the clouds to deliver to the German populace their savior, Rosenberg commented: "[A]n implement has been placed in human hands which, if utilized by those conscious of goals, could cause millions of hearts to beat in a single direction."[13] What opportunities then remain for any heart not to beat in unison with the multitude?

By 1934, film had become a recognized medium for distinguishing races visually, as well as for propagating Nazi racial doctrines. Popular magazines dealing with racial science pointed out the need to counter "mixed racial types or Jews such as Chaplin and Buster Keaton who are shoved into the foreground."[14] The visual impact of film could offer dynamic examples and counterexamples of racial ideals, graphically displaying "the hatefulness of racial mixture."[15] These themes would establish "the foundations of German film," not simply in the sense that the films would be made there, but that they would portray desirable and undesirable racial types in accordance with Nazi racial hierarchies.[16] The visual appeal of attractive racial exemplars on screen would help counteract the rampant commercialism identified with Western filmmaking dominated by

Jews. The end result would be "film art, not film industry"--or as Goebbels phrased it, "A pure profiteer has nothing to do with film."[17] Why could film be considered an ideal means for disseminating "biological and racial truths"?[18]

Film held enormous promise for disseminating in concrete fashion racial doctrines at the core of National Socialism. The most direct way film could reinforce racial doctrines was to instantiate racial models and anti-models. As for the negative side of racial theory, the film Mentally Ill [Geisteskrank] exemplifies how Nazi films to promote the eradication of the hereditarily ill could portray the socially undesirable as monstrosities. Bright lighting from below cast ominous shadows on distorted, seemingly disembodied faces. Along the same lines, cartoons in Volkischer Beobachter and Der Stürmer contained stereotyped caricatures of Jews. The standard rendering of "the eternal Jew" was an unshaven man whose face was laden with thick eyeglasses, an enormous nose, and full lips. This image was all the more repulsive when juxtaposed with stalwart Aryan types.

On the positive side of racial theory, photographs of exemplary racial types complete with their racial identification graced the covers of Volk und Rasse, a national racial science magazine available to the general public. The objective of underscoring racial identity visually was to concretize racial hierarchies by pointing to the aesthetic virtues of Aryans and the repulsiveness of non-Aryans, especially Jews and Negroes. For example, one national newspaper placed a photographic profile of a Nordic woman's face next to one of a Jewish man. The

caption stated: "This clear, pure, and harmonious face [the woman's] is the symbol of all people of Germanic blood in Germany as well as in Austria."[19]

Perhaps much of Triumph of the Will's power lay in its consistently positive approach to racial models: the Nordic ideal was instantiated throughout the film. Visual exemplars of ideal racial types reappeared frequently, and they were uniformly attractive youths with standard "Aryan" appearance: blond hair, sharp features, Roman nose. Film as a whole, especially Triumph of the Will, offered vehicles for modeling racial exemplars. This presentation of racial models characterized all art authorized by the Nazi regime:

> All the people depicted in this art were racially pure. They did not mirror society but served as role models for it. They had become the incarnation of the National Socialist idea. The arts program was not an intellectual one but one transmitted through the senses, through the eye.[20]

Triumph of the Will was lavish in its close-ups of handsome Nordic types. This visual reinforcement of racial identity was consistent with the work of racial anthropologists whose books teemed with photos of racial archetypes. In a number of books on racial anthropology, Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss attempted to demonstrate how physical appearance was governed by racial laws. In any environment, physical features would eventually exhibit their innate tendencies to express themselves in ways characteristic of their racial composition. Clauss called this

principle the "law of the gestalt," and went so far as to define race as "heritable gestalt."[21] The result of such efforts, most painstakingly carried out in Clauss's Race and Soul, was to reveal "racial style," the physiological manifestation of the essential racial identity contained in the "racial soul."[22]

Racial science in the Nazi era necessarily contained a heavy visual emphasis. Volk und Rasse captioned a photograph labeled "German couple" with a request for "our readers to assist us through contributions" that would feature "typical racial pictures" so readers could identify racial types.[23] Why the continual attempts in film and in print media to propagate visual representations of racial types? Racial theory would begin to lose its status as theory or doctrine, which implied its contingency, and assume "the apparent simplicity of a description of the visible."[24] Racial doctrines called to any observer's attention visible distinctions that were already recognizable but might have gone unnoticed without the classificatory schemes provided by racial science.

Analysts of Nazi racial theories often mistakenly assert that racial identity was established solely by physical characteristics. This crude version of racial identification, however, was derided repeatedly by racial hygienists and in the press.[25] Racial identity was not a purely visual matter. Far from furnishing conclusive evidence of racial membership, physical appearance was considered a "window to the soul," so to speak. Physiological and spiritual characteristics were deemed equally important in determining racial composition and

propensities for behavior.[26] Since physical characteristics were so variable, they had to be supplemented by a racial essence that remained invariable beneath the surface: the racial soul [Rassenseele]. Hitler, Goebbels, and Göring, the three most influential Nazi political figures, were hardly perfect specimens of the trim, blond Aryan with chiseled features. Since any individual Jew might be physically indistinguishable from an Aryan, the inward differences between races outweighed physical appearance. Differences between Jews and Aryans were deemed observable in the sense that different racial souls would eventually become manifest in overt actions and in the types of influences their bearers exerted on cultural development.[27]

The film Europa Europa satirizes these purely physical indicators of race. In one scene, a Nazi instructor of racial science declares, after extensive anthropometric manipulations, that a student who is actually Jewish sports a model Nordic visage. Racial doctrine required a visual component not as an instant or sufficient indicator of racial identity, but as a way to concretize the metaphysical mystery of "pure" versus "impure" blood.

The visual component of racial theories provides a specific illustration of a more general phenomenon: the evocation of an visual image as reality. Jacques Ellul identifies photographs and visual images as important to propaganda efforts because their physical presence renders a stereotype immediate and life-like.[28] The description of racial characteristics without a demonstration of how they are realized in living examples leaves

the linguistic description to act as an intermediary between audience and object. This need for living examples explains why Book One of Clauss's Race and Character bore the title The Living Countenance. The direct physical manifestation of racial qualities dovetails with the lack of narration in Triumph of the Will. Wittgenstein points out that "A form cannot be described: it can only be presented."[29] Although few ordinary Germans might be able to articulate precisely the procedures of racial scientists, it was easy to identify behaviors and qualities that were observable as the 'living proof' that racial theories held true.

The uniformity of racial characteristics would wane if audience members were left to construct their own racial archetypes. The visual images offered a common focus to reduce the interpretive variance regarding what the epitome of racial purity or racial pollution might be. Clauss constructed a slide presentation with an accompanying book that included racial flash cards.[30] The outlines of silhouettes were shown after the subjects had been examined in detail. Eventually the observer would be able to identify the subject's race by glancing at the silhouette and noticing the distinguishing racial characteristics. Observers retained the opportunity to find many different examples within the bounds of the racial templates, as long as the basic racial characteristics remained constant.

Within this framework of racial science, what did Triumph of the Will offer viewers? Audiences were invited to become participants in the festivities without the intrusion of

narrators, without feeling subject to an agenda apart from the celebration itself. Furthermore, observer-participants brought Germany and its martyrs back to life by following the Führer-savior. Finally, theories about racial characteristics were borne out in practice. Aryans acted according to the dictates of their blood. The fulfillment of expectations based on racial grounds appeared inevitable. How, then, might we proceed to fracture this monolithic edifice that leaves little room for doubt? This question paves the way for the next phase of the investigation.

Ineffective Historical Consciousness?

In his attempt to counter what he considers the myth of absolute critical objectivity, Hans-Georg Gadamer claims that all interpretation takes place within the context of the interpreter's prejudices. Gadamer expands on Heidegger's idea that interpreters are never tabula rasa but instead find themselves always already situated within some historically conditioned "givens."[31] For viewers of Triumph of the Will, this means that regardless of entreaties to view the spectacles in the film as the Nazis did, the environment and experiences of the viewers as a post-World War II audience will encroach on their interpretations of the film. In other words, interpreters carry the baggage of their predispositions with them whenever they embark on an interpretive journey. This condition of situatedness that may alter or inhibit interpretation of objects distant from the interpreter in time, geography, culture, methods, or assumptions is known as effective-history

[Wirkungsgeschichte]. Since effective-history can distort interpretations, interpreters must become more aware of its presence, hence the need for effective-historical consciousness. Interpretation, therefore, involves a dual focus: on the object to be interpreted and on the historicity of the interpreters themselves.

Now a question may be posed resembling the challenge Jürgen Habermas levels against Gadamer. If interpreters remain subject to their prejudices, then how can they resist attempts at indoctrination that feed on those prejudices? More generally, how can a hermeneutics that recognizes deference to tradition respond critically to ideological communication that arises from appeals to tradition?[32] If viewers immerse themselves in the heritage of Prussian militarism, for example, in order to improve their comprehension of Triumph of the Will, then do they become less able to distinguish the roles of observer from that of participant? Those who would ban Triumph of the Will for fear it would reignite Nazi sympathies would answer affirmatively. A thorough grounding in Nazism and a healthy dose of German history render the message of the film not only more compelling, but apparently irresistibly persuasive. Must interpreters be held captive by their own presumptions, bound never to question their own historical situation?

Gadamer responds by invoking his concept of effective-historical consciousness. In a nutshell, Gadamer wants to say that awareness of prejudices does not imply subjection to them. Greater sensitivity toward a cultural heritage does not

necessarily generate greater agreement with the practices authorized by or engaged in by that heritage.[33] An anthropologist, for example, would lose her status as a scientist if she literally became a member of the culture she were studying. Her status as a participant-observer, however, would be equally threatened if she withheld from entering the culture as fully as possible. Several films, such as Basic Instinct, explore the consequences of an investigator violating the fine but flexible boundaries distinguishing the critical observer from the involved participant. This delicate interpretive balance between, in the context of this discussion, being a late twentieth-century American film analyst and being a Nazi sympathizer leads to the famed hermeneutical "fusion of horizons."[34] Effective-historical consciousness achieves a fusion of horizons when sensitivity toward the alien artifact is balanced with membership in the familiar present environment. The interpreter occupies both the world of the work and his own world provisionally in the sense that (1) the unfamiliar work is appreciated on its own terms, hence the membership in its world, and (2) it is not uncritically accepted as incontestably true, hence the appropriation of the work in terms of the interpreter's world.

To use one of Gadamer's favorite metaphors, that of play, which serves especially well in the context of film's dramatic staging of events, one might recognize that players become immersed in their game without becoming subject to it.[35] Of course, players subject themselves to the rules of the game, but

even children immersed in a game can still distance themselves from it. This ability to distance becomes evident in young children. When asked about a role-playing game, a child will often assert, "I'm just pretending." This admission, however, makes the game no less real while it is being played. Interpreters are not imprisoned by their own situatedness. On the other hand, interpreters also cannot escape entirely from their sociohistorical bonds.

If this response sounds satisfactory, think again. Effective-historical consciousness provides interpreters no resources for resisting or countering persuasive appeals. Moreover, how can interpreters develop a critical attitude toward their prejudices when those very prejudices shape the interpreters' attitudes to begin with? Remember, it is much easier to resist the lure of Triumph of the Will if the viewer, like our students, has not experienced the horrors of World War I and the degradations of the Depression. It is easy for viewers to dismiss Triumph of the Will if their hopes do not ride on the shoulders of the troops assembled to protect their homeland.

The racial messages in Triumph of the Will become especially problematic from a hermeneutical standpoint because they conceal their own historicity and contingency. The visual indicators of racial identity operate along the lines of self-evident truths. The film is rife with those who exhibit Aryan physiognomies acting in accordance with their racial gestalts. The model Aryans perform exactly as their racial composition would dictate: they obediently march in perfect order, cooperate in staging

large-scale military and paramilitary exhibitions, and deferentially address their leader. It is helpful to import from gestalt psychology the notion that a Gestalt or overall form consists of a totality. Triumph of the Will offers its viewers no surprises and for that very reason justifies itself. Nazi racial theories are 'proven' by showing that expectations concerning Aryan racial character are borne out in practice. The portrayal of the Aryan racial soul's propensity for order, obedience, and cooperation being brought to fruition gives the impression that Nazi racial theories have captured the essence of racial identity.

The theories might even be invested with predictability. After all, racial scientists argued that each race acted in accordance with its racial destiny. The often repeated slogan "Race is fate" was borne out in the film. The participants in the festival were living their fate by obeying the natural laws dictated by their blood. The physical coordination exhibited in the orderly marches and processions could count as a manifestation of the Germanic type of racial soul. If racial science proceeds from the axiom "As a man is, so he will behave," then the dramatic enactment of a Germanic style of racial soul shows how actions are governed by race.[36] This supposedly law-governed connection between the racial soul and its physical manifestations was given scientific status by being called the "law of racial style."[37]

It was 'only natural' for Aryans to behave as they did in Triumph of the Will. The repetition of the film, the endless

marches and militaristic exercises, reinforce the central message that the racially conditioned laws of life were self-evidently true and inviolable. The pattern of action in the film could not be broken, since "each disregard of the laws of life, which are also evident to laymen, amounts to a disturbance of the harmony of nature."[38] If Triumph of the Will documented the fulfillment of the laws of life as dictated by race, then it chronicles not simply the Reichsparteitag celebration, but the fruition of Nature's grand plan for all Germany. The Nordic race supposedly had been entrusted with the mission "to overcome human revolts against holy natural laws."[39] How, then, might interpreters insert a wedge in the apparently seamless logical unity presented by the film?

Inventional Capacity as a Hermeneutical Corrective

The problems with effective-historical consciousness may be reconfigured to approximate a conflict latent in ancient Roman rhetorical theory. That conflict involves the largely unobserved tension between two of the classical rhetorical canons: memoria and inventio. For classical rhetoricians, no tension seemed imminent, because memoria and inventio were applied to individual speeches. Invention seems directed toward the future, since it involves finding material for a presentation not yet delivered. Memory seems retrospective, a task of storing and recovering knowledge imprinted on the mind like figures in wax.[40] In fact, memory assisted invention insofar as the material a speaker generated had to be recalled come speech time. But if Gadamer and Heidegger hit the mark with their opposition to total

critical detachment, memory assumes a larger role. Far from mere remembrance of a speech, memory becomes in hermeneutical terms a cultural memory, the sum total of accumulated presuppositions and practices that could affect an interpreter's judgment and critical abilities.

Here lies the conflict between memory and invention. To depart from uncritical deference to tradition, the interpreter must balance receptivity to cultural memory with inventional resources to depart from the interpretive framework constructed with the aid of memory. Invention is the missing ingredient in effective-historical consciousness. Understanding [Verstehen] Triumph of the Will requires that interpreters develop sensitivity to the cultural memories it evokes: the carnage of World War I, the embarrassment of Versailles, the hardships of the Depression. No wonder eighteen to twenty-two year-olds find the film boring or irrelevant.

But developing memory alone, while encouraging Verstehen, does little to combat indoctrination. If understanding should be distinguished from acceptance, then inventive capacity should be encouraged as an antidote to overdoses of memory. Contrary to the golden oldie by the Teddy Bears, to know, know, know a film is not to love, love, love that film.

Applications

This essay has lingered long at the lofty heights of hermeneutical abstraction. How could invention be fueled in the case of films such as Triumph of the Will? A few very concrete suggestions follow. These exercises are designed to cultivate in

viewers a greater critical awareness of the propagandistic potential in film while maintaining sensitivity to a film's genesis in a particular historical environment.

(1) Perspectival shifts. Screen the entire film. Then ask students to pick a specific scene and interpret it through the eyes of a propagandist for the opposing side. For example, viewers of Triumph of the Will would invent ways of interpreting scenes that cut against the grain of the dominant persuasive message. This exercise is designed to reveal that messages are not univocal, but depend on the interpreter's framework for constructing responses. On a more theoretical level, the exercise develops a more critical use of effective-historical consciousness. Constructing the variant interpretations shows how artifacts assume significations as a result of contingent, historically conditioned commitments rather than universally true laws legitimized by science or other purportedly unassailable authorities.

(2) Creative deconstruction. Screen part of the film, then ask students to construct the next scene that would proceed logically from the one they just saw. These constructions, however, should be designed to oppose or undermine the principal theme of preceding scenes. For example, a viewer might append to a scene of neatly ordered military columns a scene where a soldier falls out of step and is punished publicly. A variation of the exercise would be to ask viewers to describe hypothetical outtakes that might prove embarrassing to the filmmakers.

This exercise poses the challenge of creating variant messages while maintaining logical continuity within the artifact itself. The objective is to disrupt the apparent inevitability of a message's logical progression.

These exercises would work best with films that tap into cultural memories an audience already has developed. Otherwise, the audience needs the hermeneutical equivalent of sensitivity training to develop empathy with the historical context of the film. So try balancing memory with invention. You might find your students or other audiences raising their consciences instead of their coffee cups.

Notes

[1] Leslie Halliwell, The Filmgoer's Companion, 6th ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) 725; Ephraim Katz, The Film Encyclopedia (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1979) 973.

[2] Halliwell 925; Halliwell, Halliwell's Film Guide, 2nd ed. (New York: Scribner's, 1980) 907; Georges Sadoul, Dictionary of Films, trans. and ed. Peter Morris (Berkeley: U of California P, 1972) 383-384.

[3] Paul Rotha and Howard Griffith, The Film Till Now (London: Spring, 1967) 591.

[4] Adolf Hitler, Hitler-Worte: Ein nationalsozialistischer Wegweiser für jeden Deutschen, ed. Paul Sommer, Deutschlands Erwachen, Teil 4 (Leipzig: Herm. Beyer, 1934).

[5] The Nazi flag was adopted in 1935. A caption to a picture of the new flag read: "The blood-banner, the first flag of the new Reich." See Das Schwarze Korps 19 September 1935: 1.

[6] "'Triumph des Willens'," Völkischer Beobachter 18 Oct. 1934: n. pag.

[7] "'Triumph des Willens'," Völkischer Beobachter 18 Oct. 1934: n. pag.

[8] Joseph W. Bendersky, A History of Nazi Germany (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1985) 161.

[9] "Jeder Deutsche muss Rundfunkhörer werden," Völkischer Beobachter 16 April 1934: n. pag.

[10] "Fast sieben Millionen Rundfunkhörer," Völkischer Beobachter 17 August 1935: n. pag.

[11] Alfred Rosenberg, Race and Race History and Other Essays, ed. and intro. Robert Pois (New York: Harper, 1970) 171-172.

[12] Rosenberg 173.

[13] Rosenberg 172. The entire passage is in italics in the original.

[14] Martin Otto Johannes, "Film und Rasse," Volk und Rasse 5 (1934): 155.

[15] Johannes 155.

[16] "Die Aufgaben des deutschen Films," Völkischer Beobachter 12 March 1939: 7.

[17] "Um den nationalsozialistischen Film," Völkischer Beobachter 7 June 1934: n. pag.; Joseph Goebbels, "Das Leben selbst muß wieder Inhalt des Films werden!" Völkischer Beobachter 11 Feb. 1934: n. pag.

[18] Johannes 155.

[19] "Wir suchten: den österreichischen Menschen," Das Schwarze Korps 23 Sept. 1937: 10-11.

[20] Peter Adam, Art of the Third Reich (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992) 140.

[21] Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss, Rassenseele und Einzelmensch (München: J. F. Lehmann, 1938) 28.

[22] Clauss, Rasse und Seele, 18th ed. (München: J. F. Lehmann, 1943) 9-10.

[23] Volk und Rasse 8 (1933): 125.

[24] Michel Foucault, The Order of Things, trans. [ ] (New York: Vintage 1970) 137.

[25] For example, see "Die Lagerschulung," Völkischer Beobachter 16 December 1935: n. pag.; R. F. Viergutz, "Über Rasse und Seele," Volk und Rasse 7 (January 1932): 32-44; Erwin Baur, "Der Untergang der Kulturvölker im Lichte der Biologie," Volk und Rasse 7 (April 1932): 70, 78.

[26] Caeser Schäffer, Volk und Vererbung, 12th ed. (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1938) 53.

[27] Schäffer 67.

[28] Jacques Ellul, Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes, trans. Konrad Kellen and Jean Lerner, intro. Konrad Kellen (New York: Vintage, 1973) 164n.

[29] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Remarks, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1975) § 171.

[30] Clauss, Rassenseele und Einzelmensch (München: J. F. Lehmann, 1938).

[31] Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, trans. [ ] (New York: Continuum, 1975) 267-270.

[32] Jürgen Habermas, "On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality," The Hermeneutics Reader, ed. and intro. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (New York: Continuum, 1988) 302-303, 316.

[33] Gadamer 270.

[34] Gadamer 272-273.

[35] Gadamer 92.

[36] Viergutz 34.

[37] Viergutz 41; Cf. Clauss, Rassenseele und Einzelmensch 28-32.

[38] "Rassenpflege und Volksgesundheit," Völkischer Beobachter 27 September 1935: n. pag.

[39] [Karl] Astel, "Die Schicksalfrage der weissen Völker." Völkischer Beobachter 24 Jan. 1935: n. pag.

[40] Cicero, De Partitione Oratoria, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library, ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982) vii.26; De Oratore, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library, ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1979) II.lxxxvii.354.